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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted by Catonsville Community College (Maryland) to identify thcse factors that foster successful linkages between Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) spcnsors and community colleges. The study involved: (1) identifying exemplary CETA/college linkages through consultation with experts in academe and government: (2) interviewing CETA and college personnel involved in these identified linkages to disqualify thcse that were, in fact, marked by conflict: and (3) administering a questionnaire to the remaining CETA and college personnel to determine the perceived strengths of the linkages and to identify those linkages that could serve as model CETA/college relaticnships. Major findings, based on responses from 33 CETA sponsors and 40 colleges, reveal six characteristics of successful linkages: communications and trust are maintained: tcp college administrators are committed to the program: CETA training benefits general education: the benefits of the CETA linkage are promoted at the college: a liaison person and office are established: and open entry/exit, short-term, performance-based cccupational training programs are provided. The study report examines three major barriers to successful cooperation (i.e., conflict associated with educational philosophy and mission: problems of mistrust and negative perceptions: and problems of contrasting operating styles), describes four model CETA/college linkages, and outlines summary recommendations. (JP)

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Building and Strengthening Linkages between CETA and Community Colleges

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Background and specific research objectives

The issues discussed in this paper stem from a research grant awarded to Catonsville Community College by the State of Maryland. The overall research effort has been to examine the organizational and operational linkages between selected prime sponsors and corresponding publicly funded community colleges in Maryland and throughout the country. The specific research objectives were to:

1. Identify and categorize selected existing exemplary programmatic and fiscal linkages between CETA prime sponsors and corresponding publicly funded community colleges.

2. Analyze selected existing models and their implications to CETA prime sponsors, clients, and community colleges.

3. Develop a model system of programmatic and fiscal linkages between CETA prime sponsors and community colleges which will allow for the most effective service delivery system to CETA clients.

4. Preparation of a handbook detailing objectives 2 and 3 to be distributed to CETA prime sponsors, state CETA planning offices in Maryland, and state departments of education.

5. Preparation of a video presentation to be used as a training aid.

Research design

The first significant step in data gathering was the development and use of experience surveys. These surveys, conducted with individuals associated with community colleges and CETA, resulted in useful information on the nature of linkages and suggestions for change. It became increasingly clear that the most appropriate sample to employ was that of a purposive sample of exemplary linkages. That is, a linkage or relationship which functions exceptionally well and is considered, both programmatically and fiscally, very successful. Exemplary linkages were identified in consultation with CETA researchers and experts in academe and government. Additional and frank consultation with state community college board officials and state CETA personnel resulted in a consensus of exemplary linkages to be contacted. Community college personnel and prime sponsor representatives were contacted and independently asked to evaluate their linkage. If either party indicated a less than outstanding programmatic and fiscal relationship, no further follow-up occurred. This enabled me to omit the less distinguished linkages as well as to avoid those marked by conflict. Therefore, the final purposive sample consisted of linkages identified by themselves as well as by others as being exemplary.

Two separate research questionnaires were developed and distributed to the purposive sample of prime sponsors and community colleges identified as having exemplary linkages. The purposes of the questionnaires were to: (1) verify/document exemplary linkages and to provide very general information on perceptions of the strengths of linkages; and (2) to identify linkages to visit and representatives to interview. In total, 43 prime sponsor agencies were surveyed, 33 returned the questionnaire for a 77% response; 54 community colleges were surveyed, 40 returned the questionnaire for a 74% response. The numerical imbalance reflects prime sponsor contracts with more than one community college.

Analysis of questionnaire responses and oral and written communications identified linkages to visit. In preparation for on-site visitation, a structured interview was developed for use to interview appropriate community college personnel and CETA prime sponsor staff.

Preliminary findings and observations

This section will discuss some issues generated by this research. These issues are (1) major barriers to exemplary linkages; (2) model programmatic linkages; and (3) characteristics of successful linkages.

Major barriers to exemplary linkages

1. Conflict associated with educational philosophy and mission

This conflict, often intense and deep, seems to revolve around the difference between training and education. It is a conflict between short-term, intensive, performance based occupational skills training resulting in immediate job placement versus broad-based, continuous, general education with little or no regard for occupational skill training. It is manifested in the conflict between the job placement driven system of CETA and the credit driven knowledge-based system of higher education.

2. Problems of mistrust and negative perceptions

Community colleges may perceive CETA as another social welfare agency composed of bureaucratic functionaires. CETA participants are often viewed as educationally and culturally deprived and their economic deprivation may be viewed as their own doing - a classic case of "blaming the victim." On the other hand, prime sponsors often view colleges as unresponsive to change, insulated, and unconcerned with performance/product but desirous of CETA monies. These problems permeate the crisis/conflict nature of many CETA/community college linkages.

3. Problems of contrasting operating styles utilized in different work organizations

Some prime sponsors have frequent turnover of staff and are hamstrung by federal regulations. Unspent monies may prompt prime sponsor agencies to ask colleges to be program operators with insufficient planning time. Another contrast is found in the decision-making process. Colleges have a strong tradition of shared governance and decision-making which precludes fast action. All too often, when CETA needs quick program planning and implementation, community colleges are too slow and their decision-making process too cumbersome to quickly respond. A third contrast occurs in terms of authority and control. In most work organizations, the higher one's position the greater the authority to direct and control subordinates; in many community colleges, however, the authority lies with faculty - and those at the top cannot and/or will not control those at the bottom. As a result, CETA related policies and programs may be ignored with virtual impunity. Another contrast results from the choice of a college official to direct a CETA program. A proven classroom instructor or under-loaded faculty member may lack the necessary planning, implementing, administering, evaluating skills so crucial to direct a CETA program. If interpersonal relations skills are weak and sensitivity to CETA participants and the prime sponsor is poor, then problems are exacerbated.

Other contrasts relate to one-year program funding limits by CETA when community colleges prefer multiple year funding for successful programs, and the problems inherent in accommodating two different fiscal/planning year cycles. Community colleges are typically "organic" organizations, that is, organizations characterized more by mutual consultation, extensive individual autonomy, and limited accountability. Yet prime sponsor agencies (and many private sector organizations) are typically "mechanistic" organizations, that is, organizations characterized by fixed decision making, less individual discretion, and more accountability. To some extent, conflicts in a CETA/community college linkage are rooted in two contrasting organizational structures, operations, and styles.

Model programmatic and fiscal linkages

Foothill-DeAnza Community College District and the City of Sunnyvale, California Prime Sponsor Agency

CETA recruitment, intake, eligibility determination, and initial assessment are functions of the local prime sponsor and the California Employment Development Department (E.D.D.).

A pool of CETA applicants are referred to the Occupational Training Institute (O.T.I.) at the community college. From this pool, Occupational Training Institute staff orient, assess and select those for enrollment. Basic skills assessed are math, English, reading and comprehension. Valpar work samples are given to each student. This information is used to develop an employability development plan. If job ready, the participant is referred to an E.D.D. representative. Training programs are offered in quality control, electronics technician, electronics assembly, semiconductor operations, drafting, machine tooling, and office occupations, and range from 8-36 weeks. The Occupational Training Institute also provides basic skills, E.S.L., counseling and supportive services, job preparation, job referral, job placement, and job follow-up.

Rancho Santiago Community College District and Orange County, California Manpower Commission

Rancho Santiago Community College District has a CETA Language and Assessment Center which serviced 20,000 people in 1979. Through the Center, the Rancho Santiago Community College District provides recruitment, intake, and eligibility determinatior for the City of Santa Ana. The orientation and assessment process lasts 1-3 days and is composed of:

Vitas, Valpar > hands on work samples, plus observations by counseling staff

Wide-Range Scale, Bolt, Gatby > basic skills assessment

Vision test

Interest inventories (career information AV presentation)

Employability attitudes and behaviors

This information is used to develop an employability development plan. If job ready, the participant is referred to E.D.D. for job placement. If not, a CETA participant is then referred to appropriate training in the City of Santa Ana, local secondary schools, local CBO's, proprietary schools, and Rancho Santiago Community College District. The community college provides occupational training in machine shop, clerical skills, word processing, auto repair, electronic technicians, and welding. Appropriate counseling and supportive services are provided. Two additional aspects of this linkage deserve attention. They are the 120 hour on-the-job externship toward the end of classroom training, and the use of the CETA center's model programs to increase the retention of non-CETA students.

North Orange Community College District and Orange, County, California

Manpower Commission

North Orange Community College District operates an Assessment and Recruitment Center for their service area. The Center provides recruitment, intake, eligibility determination, orientation and assessment. Assessment consists of:

Vitas
Valpar
> hands on work samples, plus observations by counseling staff

Living skills - functional (basic) skills
Interest inventories - Job Matching (AV presentation which evaluates client preferences and experiences)
Employability attitudes and behaviors
> Comprehensive Occupational Assessment and Training Systems (C.O.A.T.S.)

Vision test

This information is used to develop an employability development plan. If job ready, the participant is referred to an E.D.D. representative who is stationed at the center for job placement. If not, a CETA participant is referred to training at local CBO's, proprietary schools, or the North Orange Community College District, in numerous occupational training programs. Appropriate counseling and supportive services are provided. A 120 hour on-the-job externship program is also available.

Grand Rapids Michigan Jr. College, Occupational Training and Grand Rapids Area Employment and Training Council

Occupational Training (O.T.) provides recruitment, intake, and eligibility determination. Occupational Training personnel interview CETA eligible applicants for acceptance into occupational training programs. Assessment consists of short paper-and-pencil math and reading exams followed by a series of two separate interviews with a team of Occupational Training staff. Emphasis is placed on appropriate job related attitudes, behaviors and motivation. This is determined through observations of the applicant by the OT staff and inferred from written applicant responses. If the applicant is not accepted, they are given a list of other local employment/training opportunities to meet their needs and interests and told to re-apply for Occupational Training once their educational and attitudinal deficiencies are corrected. This assessment system is divergent, simple, and largely subjective. Sophisticated technology and extensive standardized mass testing is limited.

Occupational Training is provided in: auto mechanics, auto body repair, furniture manufacturing, house repair (carpentry), maintenance mechanics, production machine operation (metalworking), and welding.

Programs run on a 40 hour week and last from 6-9 months. It is a performance driven system with local advisory committees composed of employers participating in curriculum development. Services to participants are in the form of coaching/counseling, job skills (appropriate and necessary work related attitudes and behaviors) and job placement. Occupational Training emphasizes the subjective/motivational variables for applicants' acceptance more than strictly occupational abilities.

Characteristics of successful linkages

One overall conclusion is that CETA has fit into a responsive community college system not forced conflict in, or extensive change of, a non-responsive system.

1. Time and energy are spent in building and maintaining effective communications and trust. Honest and frequent communications are required for a partnership which serves the needs of the CETA prime sponsor agency, CETA students, and the community college. This partnership does not just happen. It is developed and nourished over years.

2. Those at the top-Presidents, Deans, etc. have committed their colleges to occupational training and serving the needs of the economically disadvantaged. They are determined to make their CETA linkage work well and have made sure that this policy is carried out by middle and lower levels of the college. The policy is supported by award or denial of extrinsic rewards (pay, promotion, tenure, etc.).

3. In successful linkages, occupational training and linkages with CETA benefit general education and the college as a whole; occupational training with CETA does not come at the expense of general education but enhances general education.

4. The community college has promoted the benefits of involvement with CETA to the faculty and staff. Some benefits of a linkage are:

A. Serving a significant portion of the community not served in the past
B. Obtaining seed money for high cost new occupational programs
C. Obtaining new equipment and resources
D. Bridging the gap between education and work
E. Building a community college constituency among CETA students and encouraging them to return to the college and enroll in credit classes
F. Strengthening ties to the private sector, and receiving equipment, technical assistance, and jobs for students

Benefits of the linkage to non-CETA students include:

A. Curricula development, refinement, and expansion
B. Sharing of equipment and resources by non-CETA students
C. Deployment of faculty in growth areas
D. CETA assessment training and placement models being applied to issues of retention and jobs for students
E. Students doing poorly in the credit portion, if CETA eligible, can easily transfer into the CETA occupational skills training program of the college
F. Indicating to local officials, and the community, organizational cooperation and shared use of scarce resources

A CETA linkage prompts the community college to seriously examine their training and educational performance and to make appropriate changes.

5. A liaison person and office is established. The person is chosen for their credibility in academe and their skills in program planning, implementation, administration, and evaluation. They are given the authority to act and are credible in the eyes of the prime sponsor and responsive to the training and educational needs of the economically disadvantaged.

6. The community college provides open entry/exit, short-term, intensive, performance based occupational skill training programs which respond to the needs of the community and CETA students. Assessment, basic skills, counseling, placement, etc. are detailed in statements of philosophy and program objectives. Faculty in the program are chosen on the basis of their achievement, talent, enthusiasm, motivation, and dedication.

Suggestions

1. Start with the goal of working with CETA. Familiarize yourself with CETA legislation, purpose, and structure, as well as the local prime sponsor personnel, structure, procedures, and educational and training needs. The college must demonstrate to the prime sponsor a desire to provide services to the community. Identify your educational and training strengths and identify with the prime sponsor your common needs, goals, and develop an action plan. Commit yourself to joint decision making as it binds each party to the success of the linkage and the programs to follow.

2. Community colleges must identify the services they are best at doing and can do whether it be assessment, occupational skills training, placement or any combination. Do not take on more program functions than you can effectively perform. Carefully define the political/social make-up of the community and do not infringe on other program operators. As you become successful, then discuss your desire to provide additional functions. Prove yourself first!

3. Emphasize to all parties the benefits of a linkage, and develop a plan to publicize this partnership.

4. Develop strong linkages with the private sector especially through the use of program/curriculum advisory committees composed of local business leaders. Also, have community college administrators responsible for CETA represent you on the local Private Industry Council (PIC).

5. Jointly develop a line-item budget. Realize that many prime sponsors believe that community colleges are out to get as much money as they can. Honesty in identifying costs and developing budgets helps build a good linkage. Omit outrageous indirect costs and indicate your in-kind contributions. If state aid is claimed, indicate an estimate of state aid to be received in your proposal as a good faith gesture. Indicate state aid received and deduct this from the final cost to CETA.

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